

Minutes of the meeting of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 11th December 2018

Present:	Mr. Mike Smith (Chairman)	Mr. John Meischke (Vice-Chairman)
	Mr. Stephen Block	Mrs. Christine Dinnin
	Mrs. Margaret Stanley	Mr. David Stock
	Dr. Emma Waltham	Mrs. Jane Allsop (Clerk)
Public:	County Councillor Ken Crofton	District Councillor Sophie Bell (after 1920)
Police:	None	

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence: Mr. Ian Knight, Mrs. Catherine Hammon and Mrs. Helen McCash

2. Public Participation

Prior to the meeting Ken Crofton informed the Parish Council that the LED lamps have now been installed in the Parish Council owned streetlights in the village and that HCC would soon be taking over their ownership. The Clerk informed Councillor Crofton that she had been in contact with Mark Burrows, who the Parish Council have been liaising with over the installation of the LED lamps. He informed her that the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council would be invoiced for streetlight energy up to the end of November and that the County Council are in the process of drawing up a document to take over the legal ownership of the Parish Council owned streetlights. The Parish Council will continue to insure the lights until the legal paperwork had been signed.

3. Chairman’s/Clerk’s Report

None.

4. Declaration of Interests

None.

5. Minutes of the last meeting

a) Acceptance

• Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 20th November 2018

Parish Councillors agreed that the minutes be approved.

b) Review of actions

1. Order Commemorative WWI Memorial seat from e by David Ogilvie Engineering

The Clerk said she needs the details of the style and size of the seat to be ordered. Mr. Smith and Mr. Meischke to give her these details.

Action: M. Smith/ J. Meischke

2. Investigate reason the goal post got stuck in its ground socket

Mr. Knight was not present at the meeting to update the Parish Council.

Action: I. Knight

3. Write article reminding villagers to keep their vehicles locked and put on website and Facebook page

This action point is outstanding.

Action: M. Smith

c) Action points resolved

1. E-mail a copy of police report to the Clerk for her to forward to all Parish Councillors
2. Write to planning department re 77 Rivershill (3/18/2316/FUL)
3. Draft response to planning department re land adjacent to BT exchange, High Street (3/18/2416/OUT)
4. Write to planning department re Land adjacent to the Willow, Perrywood Lane (3/18/2478/FUL)
5. Write to planning department re Land adjacent to the Ponderossa, Perrywood Lane (3/18/2479/FUL)
6. Install new hooded litterbins and instruct Mark Blacktin to install large litterbins
7. Arrange a meeting of the library volunteers in the New Year
8. Instruct Mark Blacktin to install bench on Station Road
9. Obtain approval of the text for the commemorative plaque
10. Consider the physical size and style of the commemorative plaque
11. **Arrange change of bank signatories** – refer to item 8a, Budget and Finance Sub-Committee.
12. Accept Mick Taylor’s quotation to paint the Community Hall kitchen
13. Purchase saucepans for the new kitchen hob
14. Arrange for the disposal of the large floor standing safe
15. Issue modified tenancy agreement to new allotment holders
16. Arrange for Mark Blacktin to install railing to denote car park area
17. Write to contractors who quoted for trees to be cut down on the Lammas
18. Obtain costings from Adam Welch for additional work around the War Memorial
19. Notify EHDC re areas to be covered by Dog control measures
20. Carryout escape lighting test and manual alarm call tests

21. Ask David Payne to clear thistles on sportsfield
22. **Speak to Bob Spinks about grass that needs strimming at the bottom of the cricket nets**
It was agreed that as the nets have now been removed this action is no longer required.
23. Monitor litter where litterbin was removed at the top of the sportsfield
24. Inspect laminated dog fouling signs re water ingress
25. Ask David Payne to clear leaves on tennis courts
26. Investigate why dog bag dispenser is empty

6. Planning

In the absence Mrs. McCash, Mr. Smith reported on the following items.

The applications below were dealt with in accordance with the Parish Council's Planning Protocol.

a) Applications

i) Heath Mount School, Woodhall Park (3/18/2568/FUL)

Creation of car park for 86 vehicles, new access and relocation of security hut with associated landscaping

This application does not directly affect anyone other than Heath Mount School.

The Parish Council agreed a 'no comment' response.

Action: J. Allsop

The Clerk said that an additional application has been received for Lane at 2 Rectory Lane. She agreed to e-mail the details to all Parish Councillors.

Action: J. Allsop

b) Decisions

i) 40 Hockerill (3/18/2189/HH)

Partial removal of garage and conversion of remaining garage

- East Herts Council – granted

ii) 3 Newmans Court (3/18/1823/HH)

Single storey rear extension

- East Herts Council – granted

7. Specific items

a) Report from District Councillor Sophie Bell

District Councillor Sophie Bell said that during the last couple of months her main focus has been on helping tenants of Clarion Housing Association. She informed the Parish Council that tenants are experiencing a wide selection of problems which are not being dealt with quickly and Clarion often take more than three weeks to respond to e-mails.

Sophie Bell expressed her concern about the planning application to develop the land adjacent to the telephone exchange and said that she had written to the planning department objecting to the application.

She has also been involved with residents' concerns about commuter car-parking once the depot-site is developed and the Station Road entrance is no longer available as a parking area.

Dr. Waltham said that the Railway company had been asked to increase the size of the station car park from land they have available. She said that the depot-site needs a change-of-use before it can be considered for housing development. The depot-site is a difficult one as it is restricted by the fact that the main sewer goes through it.

Sophie Bell said that the main problem with the building of the fifth platform has been resolved now funding for the purchase of the land has been agreed. The bus service between Hertford, Watton-at-Stone and Stevenage will commence in 2019. This is to bridge the gap between the installation of the new platform and implementation of the new train service. The new platform will take three to four years to complete.

Mr. Stock expressed his concerns about the rail-replacement bus service to be provided to and from Stevenage until such time that the new platform is operational. His main concern is the risk that village residents, in particular the youngsters and residents who do not drive, could become isolated from the retail and entertainment benefits offered by Stevenage if the timetable is not the same as that currently operated by the train service. He is not aware of who (in place of the late Mike Freeman) is now interfacing with the rail company to get reassurances about the rail-replacement bus service timetable and the type and size of the vehicles to be used.

He also said that there was the worry that the bus service could be reduced or lost in the event of low usage. Ken Crofton said he would personally ensure that this does not happen and would keep the Parish Council updated.

Sophie Bell was asked if she could pursue the community aspects of the new bus timetables, which she agreed to do. Ken Crofton said that quality buses are in place and that the services will be good.

b) Station Road update

Mr. Stock has had no word from HCC re the 'before and after report' and will therefore make contact with Adrian McWhinnie prior to the Parish Council meeting in January.

Action: D. Stock

c) Neighbourhood plan – progress report

Dr. Waltham said that she had nothing further to report from the Steering Group committee, other than the date for the public exhibition is yet to be confirmed.

d) Village litterbins

Mr. Block said that he had helped Mr. Smith fit six out of the eleven lidded litterbins and they would be fitting the remaining bins in the next week or two. **Action: M. Smith/S. Block**

Mark Blacktin has submitted a quotation of £240 to install the two large bins on concrete bases. One of these bins will be located by the Community Hall and the other one adjacent to the dog-waste bin at the end of Glebe Close, near the pedestrian gate to the school car park.

Parish Councillors agreed to accept Mark Blacktin’s quotation, Mr. Smith to notify him accordingly.

Action: M. Smith

e) Footpaths

Mr. Block said he had e-mailed Rosemary Chatindo (HCC) on 5th December asking for an update as to how their footpath report is progressing. Ms Chatindo had replied stating that they haven’t completed the report yet and will get back to Mr. Block when it is ready.

f) Library update

Mrs. Dinnin said that she will be arranging another meeting of the library volunteers in the New Year to discuss the library’s future. Numbers attending the library are low and enthusiasm from many of the volunteers is dwindling, with some having already dropped out.

Action: C. Dinnin

g) Village Benches

Mr. Smith said that Mark Blacktin has submitted a quotation £350 (£70 for materials and £280 for labour) to relocate the former Church Walk bench, to Station Road. The bench will be installed on a concrete base and sited on the grass verge beyond the entrance to Watton Place Clinic and before the footpath link to Hazeldell. Parish Councillors agreed to accept Mark Blacktin’s quotation on the condition that he reduces his labour charges. Mr. Smith agreed to notify Mark Blacktin accordingly.

Action: M. Smith

Note: Mark Blacktin agreed to reduce his labour charges by £30 to £250.

h) Commemorative plaques

Mr. Stock proposed that the plaque be either:

- circular in shape, e.g. similar to the Nigel Gresley one at the railway station
- or oval, e.g. similar to the one in the Parish Council Meeting Room.

He also proposed that the layout of the text be such that the memorial wording would be in the centre of the plaque, with the year (i.e. 2018) centred vertically above and ‘Watton-at-Stone Parish Council’ centred vertically below, and tracking the curvature of the rim of the plaque. Whichever one is chosen, it was agreed that the colour of the plaque be the same as the ‘Nigel Poulton Community Hall’ sign on the outside wall adjacent to the main entrance of the building.

Mr. Stock to provide illustrations of both options so that a choice can be made and agreed upon.

Action: D. Stock

8. Reports

a) Sub-Committees

Budget & Finance

Mr. Block reported on the following items.

- **Monthly accounts**

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council

Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty cash - Payments	
None		None	
Cheques issued			
British Legion	Poppy donations		80.00
David Payne	Cut down thistles on sportsfield and clear leaves from		75.00
Wages and salaries	November		1254.39
Frank Cooper	2 Grass cuts in October		141.60
JRB Enterprises	Bags for Dog waste dispenser		90.24
Blue Bury Contractors	Grass cutting		<u>810.00</u>
			2451.23
Cheques received			
1 Allotment holders	Allotment rents 2018/2019 plus £50 deposit		75.00
Sports and Social Club	Sportsfield facilities – 3 rd quarter payment		375.00
			450.00

Watton-at-Stone Community Hall

Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty Cash -Payments	
Carla Beach – (3 weeks)	94.50	Philip Smith – travel expenses	27.00
Tony Silvestri – Pavilion (3 weeks)	30.00	JSM Archery – Archery	40.00
Claire Messina – Main Hall and	75.00	Tony Silvestri – Yoga	70.00
Mark Smith – Main Hall and Pavilion	85.00	John Lewis – 2 saucepans	19.00
Felicitas Dixon - donation	5.00		156.00
Youth Girls Football – Main Hall hire	40.00		
Active East Herts - October	411.00		
	740.50		
Cheques issued			
Rosemary Brown	25 hours cleaning		215.50
Floodlighting Limited	Replace floodlight lamp		144.00
Wages	November		398.26
Silkwood Kitchens	Final payment		1,000.00
HCC	Cleaning materials – October and November		121.30
			1,879.06
Cheques received			
Linsey Hanlon	Main Hall and Pavilion hire		72.00
East Herts District	Pavilion hire for District Councillor election in August		153.60
Tumble Tots	Main Hall hire – November and December		272.00
Paula Sutton	Main Hall hire		205.20
East Herts District	Forever Active East Herts		240.00
Jo and Kaine Joel	Main Hall and Pavilion hire		45.00
Felicitas Dixon	Main Hall and Pavilion hire		22.00
Chloe Teoli	Main Hall hire		547.20
			1557.00

Parish Councillors agreed the payments.

- Approval of minutes of Budget and Finance Sub-Committee meeting held on 27th November 2018**
 Parish Councillors who attended the Budget and Finance Sub-Committee meeting on 27th November approved minutes. Mr. Block to sign a copy of the minutes. **Action: S. Block**
 The following recommendations were approved.

 - Community Hall hourly-rate for 2019/20**
 The Community Hall hire-charges to remain the same gross amount (i.e. gross including VAT regardless of the percentage rate).
 The Budget and Finance Sub-Committee to review the hiring costs annually in six-months' time.
 This item be put on the Parish Council agenda for May 2019. **Agenda: 05/2019**
 - The Sports and Social Club hire-charge for 2019/20**
 The Sports & Social Club annual hire charge to be increased from £3,000 to £3,090 per annum.
 Mr. Knight to notify the Sports and Social Club accordingly. **Action: I. Knight**
 - Allotment rents for 2019/20**
 The allotment rent remains the same at £28 per full allotment and £14 for one half of an allotment.
 On 1st October 2018, the water charges were increased from £7 to £10 per full allotment and £3.50 to £5 for one half allotment.
 To establish more precisely how much to charge the allotment holders for water on 1st October 2019, the water bills for the period 2018/19 will be assessed prior to allotment invoices being submitted. This item to be placed on the Parish Council agenda for September 2019. **Agenda: 09/2019**
 - Accept the following Quotations received from contractors**

 - Frank Cooper and Son Limited quotation (dated 24th November) to gang-mow sportsfield at £60 per cut (plus VAT).
 - Jeff Skidmore Contractors quotation dated 26th November 2018 for grass cutting works on the Lammas and Watton Green for a total of £1,675 (plus VAT)
 - Jeff Skidmore Contractors quotation dated 26th November for cutting the sportsfield and church walk hedges for a total of £400

The Clerk to write to all contractors accordingly. **Action: J. Allsop**

- **Employees and self-employed remuneration**

Parish Councillors approved the rate increase for Rosemary Brown.

The Clerk left the meeting while her salary was discussed.

Mr. Block said that the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) has agreed the new pay scales for 2019-2020 to be implemented from 1 April 2019.

The Clerk is currently on spine point SCP27. The new spine points have been revised, which would put her on either SCP20 or SCP21.

After discussion, Parish Councillors agreed to put the Clerk on the SCP21 level and the associated budget figures for 2019/20 be increase by £610. The Clerk to be instructed to amend the budget figures.

Action: J. Allsop

The Clerk returned to the meeting.

- **Budget 2019/20**

All Parish Councillors were copied with the budget figures for 2019/20 prior to the meeting together with the budget notes, which they formally approved. Approved budgets attached. **See attached**

- **Precept 2019/20**

It was agreed that the provisional precept requirement for 2019/20 is £36,070.

The Clerk to notify East Herts Council accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

- **SLCC Annual membership**

The SLCC membership renewal for 2019 is £156, an increase of £9 on the 2018 fees. This membership, which is in the Clerk's name, provides the Parish Council with legal advice and useful information about changes in legislation, e.g. change in accounting practices. Although this information is also available from the Hertfordshire Association of Local Councils, their annual membership fee would be in the region of a thousand pounds. Parish Councillors agreed to renew the SLCC membership. **Action: J. Allsop**

- **Bank accounts and signatories**

The completed change of bank signatory forms will be posted to Santander within the next week.

Mr. Block said he would investigate alternative bank accounts that provide better rates of interest as well as looking at a debit card for the Parish Council/Community Hall. **Action: S. Block**

Community Hall Trustees

Mr. Meischke reported on the following items

- **Kitchen update**

The kitchen is now complete, and all the snagging points have been rectified by Silkwood Kitchens.

Mike Taylor has painted the kitchen walls and Parish Councillors agreed that the upgraded kitchen looks very good.

- **Active East Herts grant**

EHDC agreed to give the Community Hall £200 towards tuition fees. The Community Hall was required to submit an invoice and therefore had to add £40 VAT element to the invoice. EHDC have paid £240 direct into our bank account.

- **Path round Community Hall**

Mr. Meischke said that he has asked Paul Reynolds (Strong Base Driveways and Landscaping) to submit a quotation for lifting and relaying the path around the Community Hall. He has also asked Mark Blacktin to quote for levelling just the most uneven slabs.

- **White board for Committee room**

Mr. Meischke agreed to investigate the purchase of a whiteboard which can double up as projector screen. Parish Councillors agreed that the purchase price of the whiteboard should be in the region of £200 plus VAT. **Action: J. Meischke**

- **Safe**

Mr. Meischke said he had found someone that would pay for the removal of the safe, therefore relieving us of the disposal problem. Parish Councillor agreed of its disposal. **Action: J. Meischke**

- **Play area safety surface**

Mr. Meischke said that he had tried to obtain three quotations for replacing the safety surface under the rainbow multi play and slide but had only been successful in obtaining two. The following quotations are to remove the existing safety surface and replace it with a new surface that extends to meet up seamlessly with the toddler area on one side and the supernova on the other, thus avoiding trip hazards.

- Wicksteed Leisure Limited £6,559.00 plus VAT
- Abacus Playground Limited £5,885.44 plus VAT

Parish Councillors agreed to accept Abacus's quotation and that the work should be funded from New Homes Bonus funds. Abacus to be instructed to do the work in April/May 2019, when the sportsfield surface will be dry enough for heavy machinery to go across.

The Clerk to notify Abacus and on confirmation of the order, contact Wicksteed Leisure accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Poppies storage**

Mr. Meischke said that Mrs. Dinnin had asked him if the poppy paraphernalia, needed each year for the annual poppy collections, could be stored at the Community Hall. He agreed to do so, and it is now being stored in one of the loft spaces. Parish Councillors approved this action.

Recreation and Amenities Sub-Committee

In the absence of Mr. Knight, Mr. Meischke reported on the following items.

- **Tennis Courts – floodlighting bulb.**

One of the floodlighting bulbs is faulty. No action will be taken at the present time.

- **Toilet lock**

Mr. Meischke said that the Tennis Club have failed to reset the toilet door lock on several occasions and youngsters have been seen using the facilities. Fortunately, no damage has been done. Mr. Knight to remind the Tennis Club members to reset the door lock after use.

Action: I. Knight

- **Football pitch line marking**

The Clerk said that over the last year she has been contacted by the Football Club re requests for pitch marking. She in turn instructs Frank Cooper and Son Limited to do the work and the Football give the Parish Council a donation for the net cost of this work. However, there is a conflict between two members of the two football teams, who disagree who is responsible for making payments.

Parish Councillors agreed that the Football Club must contact Mr. Knight, in his capacity as Secretary of the Sports and Social Club, requesting line marking. If the works need doing, Mr. Knight will instruct the Clerk to contact Frank Cooper & Son Limited.

The Clerk to notify Mr. Knight accordingly.

Action: J. Allsop

Environment Sub-Committee

Mrs. Dinnin reported on the following item.

- **Revised strimming/mowing/flowerbed maintenance and leaf clearance schedule**

Mrs. Dinnin said that Adam Welch's maintenance schedule has been updated to include the extra work required at the War Memorial and additional strimming required on the Lammas.

It was agreed that the revised schedule should be e-mailed to Adam Welch.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Leaves on station road**

Adam Welch will be clearing the leaves on Station Road as an additional item to his normal schedule.

- **War Memorial**

Mr. Smith and Mr. Meischke have looked at the idea of resin-bonding the War Memorial area to reduce the weeding problems that arise from the gravelled areas. This was after the Clerk sent them an image of the Richard Hale War Memorial, which has recently been resin bonded by Paul Reynolds company, Strong Base Driveways and Landscaping. The Clerk to e-mail Parish Councillors a copy of the image of the Richard Hale War Memorial.

Action: J. Allsop

The Environment Sub-Committee will need to meet on site to formulate plans for upgrading this area.

- **Watton green**

Mrs. Dinnin said that the Watton Green Information board needs replacing. She has asked Tony Bradford (CMS) to see if he could find the artwork for the Watton Green information Boards.

b) Routine Reports

i) **Emergency escape lighting tests and manual alarm call tests - Outstanding.**

Mr. Meischke and Mr. Smith did the above tests prior to the meeting.

ii) **Gas and electricity meter readings**

Mr. Meischke gives the Clerk gas and electricity meter readings at the end of each month and she uploads these readings to the providers websites.

iii) **Weekly reports - Fire Inspection and shower tests**

None.

iv) Health and Safety for Community Hall

None.

v) Monthly village-report

Mrs. Stanley completed the report on 9th December 2018 and reported on the negative items highlighted in the monthly village-report.

- **Play area safety surface** - muddy with deep puddles x 2.

Mrs. Stanley asked if the Parish Council might consider fencing around the children's play area. She was informed that this was not possible for safety reasons because there is not a sufficient runoff from the football pitch and players would be at risk of running into the play area fence and injuring themselves.

- **Allotments** - as previously reported, the trellis attached to the fence by the property 'Chestnuts' is causing it to fall into the allotment area. Mr. Smith said he would speak to Linsey Holt (Property Manager, Woodhall Estate) again about this issue. She had told him that the estate would be carrying-out the repair work.
- **Mill Lane** – the Mill building looks as though it has been breached. Some of the bricked-up window and door areas have holes in them.
Sophie Bell agreed to notify the EHDC Enforcement officers. **Action: S. Bell**
- **Salt bins** - one of the Moorymead Close salt bins is padlocked. This salt bin is not for public use.

vi) Weekly sportsfield

None.

vii) Website/Facebook

Write article reminding villagers to keep their vehicles locked at night and upload to Facebook.

Action: M. Smith/J. Allsop

viii) Highway and Lighting faults

None.

ix) Dog fouling reports

Refer to last bulleted item under 'Monthly village-report'.

x) Police reports

Sergeant Duncan Wallace e-mailed his report to the Clerk, which covers the three-week period between the Parish Council's last meeting and this one.

The Clerk to forward his e-mail to all Parish Councillors.

Action: J. Allsop

9. Correspondence received

None.

10. Village organisations

- **Watton-at-Stone Youth Club**

Mr. Meischke said that the number of children attending Youth Club are very low.

11. Items for Parish News

No items were identified for inclusion in the February 2018 issues of the Parish News.

The meeting closed at 2040.

The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 15th January 2019.